



Professor Beto's Tips to Writing a Great Scholarship Essay

1. Answer the question!
2. Show us who you are and how you think
3. Check it, recheck it, have others check it



DO THIS: 	DON'T DO THIS: 	Notes:
<p>Make sure you understand the question. If you aren't sure, ask someone!</p>	<p>Don't decide the question is unworthy of you or too difficult and write about something else.</p>	
<p>Mentally picture the reviewers with a stack of applications to read. How will your essay stand out? What can you write that will not sound like all the other applications?</p>	<p>Don't take an essay you wrote for something else and only make minor changes. Customize it! If you are starting with an old essay, work harder at adapting it to fit the question.</p>	
<p>Be yourself. If you have a sense of humor, let it show in an appropriate way. If you are not funny, don't try to be. Don't assume a personality for responding to the question that is not yours.</p>	<p>Don't get so extreme with "being yourself" that you come across as smug, arrogant, immature, or disrespectful. Don't use slang expressions or colloquialisms. These are reviewers, not your buddies.</p>	
<p>Use personal stories and experiences that relate to the question and illustrate your values, priorities, beliefs, thought processes, etc. These make the essay so much more interesting!</p>	<p>If the question calls for factual analysis or research, don't just describe your thoughts and feelings. Include actual data or facts from credible sources and <i>do not cite Wikipedia</i>.</p>	
<p>Check it for tone: Is it sappy? Is it boring? Is it robotic? Is it depressing? Strive for balance.</p>	<p>Don't rely on your "quirkiness" to win over the reader. Show that you are serious and mature but also a human.</p>	
<p>Refer to your family background, culture, upbringing, etc., if they have something to do with your position on the issue or otherwise relate to the question.</p>	<p>DO NOT describe your prejudices or dislikes of other individuals or groups of people; denigrate others, or include religious messages in your response.</p>	
<p>Use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation! Check it, check it, check it! Wavy lines = problem. Fix it!</p>	<p>Don't assume you are such a great writer that you don't need anyone to review your work. Have it checked!</p>	
<p>Describe community service and extracurricular activities in terms of what you learned from them, why those experiences were meaningful.</p>	<p>Don't assume that having service hours is enough. Describe the service/club/activity, why the activity matters, what you learned from it, and how it impacted you and others.</p>	
<p>Be sure to provide adequate background and context for your answers.</p>	<p>Don't assume the reviewer is familiar with you, your school, your extracurricular activities, or your community. Provide this context!</p>	

Review Checklist:

	SELF-REVIEW NOTES	PEER/TEACHER REVIEW NOTES
Re-read the question or essay prompt. Does the essay fully answer the question?		
Does it sound like an essay that has been recycled from another assignment or application?		
Does it sound like the student, or like it was written to sound like a student that will be more appealing to the reviewers?		
Is there good use of facts and data where needed (with sources identified)? Does it include personal stories or examples where appropriate?		
Is the tone of the essay balanced and appropriate, or is it excessively dour, gloomy or excessively exuberant or shallow?		
Does the essay include inappropriate content or does it reference the student's dislike or judgment of others based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.?		
Are there any spelling or grammar issues, awkward or unclear wording, run-on sentences, etc.?		
Are service projects and extra-curricular activities sufficiently defined or explained to the unfamiliar reader?		
Are service projects and extra-curricular activities described in terms of what the student learned or gained from the experience, or just in terms of how much time was spent on the activity?		